

# III. CLASSIFICATIONS



## A. INTRODUCTION

San Antonio's parks are all unique in their location, size, and type of facilities and amenities. Likewise, the City's recreation programs vary widely by content, audience, and the place and time they are offered. When San Antonio's parks and recreation system was evolving in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, little thought was given to planning.

San Antonio's parks are found where 18<sup>th</sup> century Spanish colonists established them; where real estate developers sought to create green space for their subdivisions regardless of adjoining areas; where individuals were able to donate and/or sell unwanted land to the City; and where parks were located for political expediency. Historically few of San Antonio's early existing parks were located based purely on the needs of its citizens. Only recently was more effort made to acquire and develop parks in areas of fastest growth.

Today, however, it is important to continually analyze San Antonio's existing or proposed park and recreation facilities and programs to determine how they do (or can) address specific community needs. The nature of each facility and program must be studied to determine if it is achieving its potential. Are facilities suited to the community's needs and are they receiving maximum use? Are programs designed to meet specific community needs and are they reaching the maximum target audience?

## B. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

To assist with this analysis, a list of park classifications has been developed that describes the key features of each type of park facility. Each existing park is assigned to one classification according to its predominant characteristics. It is recognized, however, that a park may have characteristics of, and be assigned to, one or more classifications. The classification of existing parks is found in the city-wide park inventory in the next Chapter, as well as in each park planning subarea inventory.

An estimated cost range for developing traditional park types has been established (in 2005 dollar figures). This cost will vary depending on the types of facilities included in the park-- decisions that are based on site constraints, budget, and community input. These cost ranges are stated in the following section and detailed cost breakdowns are found in Appendix C. It is important to note that all facilities, whether rehabilitated or new, require compliance with all local, state, and federal codes, most notably the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and safety codes dealing with playgrounds. This compliance can have a dramatic impact on the cost of a particular facility.

### 1. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK (NP)

#### a. Definition

Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of a park system, and are recreational and social centers for those living in the nearby service area. Neighborhood parks are not intended to be used for programmed activities that attract city-wide users and that could result in overuse, noise, parking problems, and congestion. It is important for these parks to be easily accessible from throughout the neighborhood area, and for particular attention to be paid to non-vehicular access. Trails or sidewalks and low-volume streets may all be used to provide access. Playgrounds are usually a high priority. Restroom facilities for users are not normally included because of access to home by users. Off-street parking should be minimal. Park lighting should be primarily for safety and security.

#### b. Recommended Size

- Optimum size is from 3 acres to 10 acres.

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## c. Recommended Uses

- Neighborhood parks should balance active and passive uses as appropriate.
- Active use facilities include play structures, sport courts, and informal play fields.
- Passive use facilities include trails, picnic areas, small shelters, and vegetative conservation/ornamentation areas.

## d. Basic Facilities Menu

The cost of developing a typical neighborhood park may range from \$125,000 to \$400,000. Costs are dependent on existing site conditions and the level of development as determined with community input. A typical neighborhood park may include one or more, but rarely all, of the following amenities.

- Playground
- Basketball/Multi-use court
- Skate plaza
- Park toilet
- Informal play fields/open space
- Walking trails
- Utilities
- Security lighting
- Parking/access control
- Park furnishings
- Landscaping

## 2. COMMUNITY PARK (CP)

### a. Definition

A community park meets the recreational needs of several neighborhoods and may also preserve unique landscapes and open spaces. These parks accommodate group activities and recreational facilities that are not provided in neighborhood parks. Community park sites should be accessible by arterial and collector streets. Restroom facilities and off-street parking for facility users should be considered. Park lighting should be for security and safety as well as facility use.

### b. Recommended Size

- While the optimal size for a community park is between 10 and 50 acres, acreage should be based on the land area needed to accommodate desired uses. Size may also vary with the demographic profile, population density, resource availability, and recreation demand within the service area.

### c. Recommended Uses

- Community parks should provide for both active and passive uses. Recreation centers, gymnasiums, and cultural activity facilities may be appropriate.
- Active use recreation facilities may include large play structures, sport courts, formal ball fields, and swimming pools.
- Passive use recreation facilities may include trails, individual and group picnic areas, open recreation areas, and unique landscape features.

### d. Basic Facilities Menu

The cost of developing a typical community park may range from \$600,000 to \$4,900,000. Costs are dependent on existing site conditions and the level of development as determined with community input. A typical community park may include one or more, but rarely all, of the following amenities.

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- Large playground
- Basketball/Multi-use court with lighting
- Concrete skate park
- Park toilet(s)
- Restroom structure
- Tennis court
- Volleyball court
- Youth athletic fields
- Swimming pool with bathhouse
- Trail
- Individual picnic facilities
- Group picnic facility
- Recreation center
- Utilities
- Security lighting
- Parking/access control
- Park furnishings
- Landscaping

## 3. LARGE URBAN PARK (LUP)

### a. Definition

Large urban parks supplement neighborhood and community parks, serving broader community-based recreation needs in addition to those addressed by neighborhood and community parks. These parks may include large areas of undeveloped land with natural vegetation and/or water features. Park location is determined by the size, quality, and suitability of available sites. Restroom facilities and off-street parking should be provided for facility users. Park lighting should be for security and safety as well as facility use.

### b. Recommended Size

- While the optimal size for a large urban park is over 50 acres, each park is unique. Park size should be based on acreage needed to accommodate desired uses as well as the demographic profile, population density, available resources, natural conditions, and recreation demand in the service area.

### c. Recommended Uses

- In large urban parks, land is distributed between active and passive uses on a site-by-site basis.
- Active use recreation facilities may include trails, individual and group picnic areas, open recreation areas, unique landscape features, and cultural events facilities.
- Passive use recreation facilities may include trails, individual and group picnic areas, open recreation areas, unique landscape features, and cultural events facilities.

### d. Basic Facilities Menu

The cost of developing a typical large urban park may range from \$1,250,000 to \$6,000,000. Costs are dependent on existing site conditions and the level of development as determined with community input. A typical large urban park may include one or more, but rarely all, of the following amenities.

- Large playground
- Basketball/Multi-use court
- Concrete skate park
- Dog park

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- Tennis court
- Volleyball court
- Sports fields
- Swimming pool with bathhouse
- Water spray playground
- Trail
- Trail lighting
- Disc golf course
- Individual picnic facilities
- Group picnic facility
- Restrooms
- Park toilets
- Allowance for unique landscape feature development
- Recreation center
- Utilities
- Security lighting
- Roads, parking/access control
- Accessible walks
- Park furnishings
- Landscaping

#### 4. **SPORTS COMPLEX (SC)**

a. Definition

Sports complexes consolidate programmed athletic fields and associated facilities at large sites which are to be strategically located throughout the community. Sports complexes, unlike neighborhood and community parks, are meant for city-wide use. These complexes should be located within reasonable driving distances of target populations, and adjacent to non-residential land uses. They relieve the negative impacts on smaller parks such as over-use, noise, traffic congestion, and parking issues. Adequate spectator seating and parking should be provided. Lighting should be for security, safety, and facility use.

b. Recommended Size

- The size of a sports complex is determined by projected need and programs and activities.

c. Recommended Uses

- Facilities at sports complexes are determined by demographic profiles, age group populations, and participation rates, as well as program offerings and projected demands of user groups and athletic associations.
- Sports complex facilities may include ball fields, soccer and football fields, game courts, play structures, swimming pools, gymnasium, aquatic facilities, sports stadiums, golf courses, disc golf courses, tennis centers, multipurpose buildings, and appropriate support facilities.

d. Basic Facilities Menu

The cost of developing a typical sports complex varies depending on facilities. Costs are dependent on existing site conditions and the level of development as determined with community input. A sports complex typically includes one of the following amenities.

- Softball complex
- Soccer complex
- Tennis complex

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- Athletic center building
- Natatorium
- Golf course
- Disc golf course
- Large concrete skate park

#### 5. NATURAL AREA (NA)

##### a. Definition

Natural Areas are park sites established for the protection and stewardship of outstanding natural attributes of local, regional, and statewide significance. Natural Areas are intended to be used in a sustainable manner for scientific research, education, aesthetic enjoyment, and appropriate public use not detrimental to the primary purpose. Minimal infrastructure may include access, parking, signage and security lighting as appropriate. For additional information on the development and management of Natural Areas refer to this documents companion, “*Volume 3: Land Use and Management Planning Guidelines for Natural Areas*” (January 2003), included herein.

##### b. Recommended Size

- The size and location of natural areas are determined by significance, availability, and opportunity to conserve the resource.

##### c. Recommended Uses

- These areas are resource rather than user-based, but some passive recreation opportunities such as nature study, hiking, biking, and picnicking may be provided.
- Preservation of the resource integrity must guide development.

##### d. Basic Facilities Menu

The cost of developing a typical natural area may range from \$100,000 to \$250,000. Costs are dependent on existing site conditions and the level of development as determined with community input. A typical natural area may include one or more of the following amenities.

- Parking/access control
- Trailhead facility
- Multi-purpose trails (hiking, biking, and/or equestrian)
- Park toilets
- Park furnishings
- Utilities

#### 6. GREENWAY (GW)

##### a. Definition

Greenways are linear features that emphasize harmony with the natural environment. Their purpose is to allow safe, uninterrupted pedestrian movement along both natural and/or man-made corridors. They will often follow suitable natural features such as rivers and creeks, but may also follow man-made corridors including revitalized waterways, drainage ways, utility easements, and abandoned railroad beds. Greenways may connect neighborhoods and/or natural landscape features and provide non-motorized transportation routes as well as recreation opportunities. Minimal infrastructure may include access, parking, signage, and security lighting as appropriate. For additional information on the development of Greenways refer to this documents companion, “*Volume 2: Planning and Design Guidelines for Creek Based Greenway Parks*” (May 2001), included herein.

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b. Recommended Size

- Greenway width typically is a minimum of 200 feet. Location is determined by resource availability, linkage need, and opportunity of utilizing the resource.

c. Recommended Uses

- Greenways can accommodate various modes of travel, notably hiking, walking, jogging, and bicycling.
- Greenways can provide passive recreation opportunities such as nature study, hiking, and picnicking.

d. Basic Facilities Menu

The cost of developing a typical greenway may range from \$100,000 to \$650,000. Costs are dependent on existing site conditions and the level of development as determined with community input. A typical greenway may include one or more of the following amenities.

- Multi-purpose trails (hiking, biking, equestrian)
- Trailhead facility
- Parking/access control
- Park toilets
- Park furnishings
- Utilities

#### 7. HISTORIC RESOURCE (HR)

a. Definition

Historic resources are sites, structures, buildings, and individual park items or features set aside to preserve and enhance their historic, cultural, and archaeological significance.

b. Recommended Size

- The size and location of historic facilities are determined by resource availability and significance and opportunity of utilizing the resource.

c. Recommended Uses

- The use of historic facilities is determined by the unique nature of each resource.
- Preservation of the resource must guide development.

d. Facilities Cost Estimate

Cost varies with site and use.

#### 8. SPECIAL USE FACILITY (SUF)

a. Definition

Special use facilities have a broad range of single-purpose uses. The service area for these facilities is community-wide. Each facility is unique, and should be developed as determined with community input.

b. Recommended Size

- The size and location of special use facilities are determined by community interests, type of facility, and land availability.

c. Recommended Uses

- Special use facilities may be sites such as downtown plazas, botanical gardens, amphitheaters, and cemeteries.

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- d. Facilities Cost Estimate  
Cost varies with site and use.

## 9. URBAN SPACE (US)

- a. Definition  
Urban space includes a broad range of remnant landscapes related to metropolitan area development including parkways, ornamental areas, medians, traffic islands, and minor drainage ways.
- b. Recommended Size
  - The size and location of urban spaces are primarily determined by resource availability and opportunity of utilizing the resource.
- c. Recommended Uses
  - Urban spaces are primarily ornamental or utilitarian, with site visibility as a criterion.
- d. Facilities Cost Estimate  
Cost varies with site and use.

## C. PROGRAM CLASSIFICATIONS

Like park types, recreation programs may also be classified according to their particular attributes. Program classifications and types are generally based on the age of participants, the type of activity, the time of day or time of year the program is offered, as well as the location of where the program is offered. All programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department are inventoried in the next Chapter.

### 1. AFTER SCHOOL CHALLENGE PROGRAM

The After School Challenge Program (ASCP) is implemented during both the traditional and year-round school year. The program works with eight area school districts and is currently running programs in 138 schools. Programming is provided Monday through Friday, for a maximum of three hours per day. The Program focuses on the elementary, middle school, and high school youth who may not be involved in extracurricular activities or whose only alternative is to go home after school.

### 2. AQUATICS

Aquatics programming occurs at any of the City's twenty-three outdoor community pools and two natatoriums. Learn-to-Swim classes, competitive swimming programs, and water aerobics classes are offered at several of the pools. Lifeguard training is also offered at the San Antonio Natatorium for those seeking employment with SAPARD as a lifeguard. The Natatorium also offers swim lessons, water aerobics classes, lap swimming, and year round open swim periods. During the summer months when outdoor pools are open (9 – 13 weeks a year), admission to the pools are free of charge.

### 3. ATHLETICS

Athletics programming is offered through organized sports for both youth and adults. Youth activities include amateur boxing, tennis, summer track and field meets, and girls fast pitch leagues and tournaments. Adult activities include men's and women's softball, basketball leagues, and league teams.

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## 4. CULTURAL PROGRAM

Cultural programming provides art training to all people ages 5 and older. Various classes are offered including modern dance, hip hop, flamenco, folklorico, Afro-Brazilian, jazz, tap, fine arts, tumbling, fitness, guitar, percussion, voice classes, pageants, and talent shows. These all help to build self-esteem and confidence. Exposure to art education also helps to develop self-expression, critical thinking skills, and cooperation and appreciation of the work of others.

## 5. GOLF

The City operates seven municipal golf courses. PGA professionals are available to provide instruction and golfing tips. A junior golf program for area children ages 6 to 18 is offered throughout the year and includes instructional clinics, 9 and 18 hole tournaments, and other golf events.

## 6. OUTDOOR EDUCATION

- a. Natural Area parks, including Friedrich Park, Eisenhower Park, Walker Ranch Historical Landmark Park, and Medina River Park offer educational opportunities for all ages. Participants can learn bird watching, native plant use and identification, geology, archaeology, stargazing, and much more. These parks are open seven days a week, but some are closed on Christmas and New Years days. Each park has trails accessible to people with disabilities.
- b. The San Antonio Botanical Gardens offers classes in a variety of subjects and study areas including landscaping, herb gardening, plants that attract butterflies, and decorating with natural plant material. Additional programs are offered for children's gardening.

## 7. RECREATION (Year Round, Community Centers, and Summer Programs)

The City's 26 Community Centers provide recreational and educational programs throughout the year. The programs are designed to serve both youth and adults and supervised by recreational professionals. Additionally, programs include Kid Quest Summer Program at approximately 40 school sites, Play Zone Summer Program, Teen Connection, and Summer Food Service Program, providing free lunches during the summer, holiday camps, camping programs, teen clubs, Bike Expo, Camping Adventure, arts and crafts, organized games and tournaments.

## 8. THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

The Therapeutic Recreation Program provides recreational programs for both youth and adults with special needs. The program provides an outlet for participants to be involved in constructive recreational pursuits. Activities include an Adult Day Program where participants develop recreational, social and life skills in a structured setting. The Blaze Sports Program offers wheelchair sports activities in tennis, track & field, fencing, basketball, rugby and various wheelchair sport tournaments. Special events include dances, parades, flea markets, bowling and other events. The TR program also offers participation in Special Olympic events. Youth programs also include a Summer Day Program and an Outreach Program to the schools.

## 9. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Volunteer Services Division provides concerned individuals and groups opportunities to assist in the clean-up and beautification of City parks. The City matches workers with selected sites (workers may also choose their own site), designs the project, and provides the tools and supplies needed for the project. All age groups are invited and encouraged to participate. Tasks



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include painting, trash pick up, and digging grass from playground “fall zone” areas. In FY 2003-2004, there were 4,840 volunteers who helped keep city parks clean and safe.

#### **10. YOUTH ATHLETICS**

Youth Athletics provides programming for young people ages 6 to 19. All activities are designed to help participants develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and an understanding of the value of team play. Activities include flag football, volleyball, soccer, Spurs Drug Free Basketball, fishing contest, Elks Soccer Shoot Out, Punt, Pass and Kick, NBA Two Ball Competition, Inner City Games, and the Alamo City Shoot Out Basketball Tournament. These activities take place in community centers and other city